

RECOMMENDATION TO THE LEGISLATURE OF ALASKA FROM THE ALASKA CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION

Recommendation 4-2020, adopted September 10, 2020:

Recommendation Regarding Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training

It is critical that identified law enforcement personnel, inclusive of dispatch and tribal police officers, receive specific training to manage a person experiencing a behavioral health crisis and have established partnerships with community behavioral health service providers. CIT trained law enforcement personnel are critical to de-escalating a person's crisis, connecting them to appropriate professional behavioral health services and mitigating the risk of harm (to the person in crisis or the law enforcement officer) or inappropriate incarceration.

The Commission recommends that the legislature allocate increased funding to the Alaska Police Standards Council to

- (1) support existing law enforcement agencies, their respective communities and tribal police officers to enhance Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training (CIT) opportunities and
- (2) expand and/or establish a CIT co-response model in communities where there is necessity, interest, and capacity.

CIT academies based on the Memphis Model have been held in Alaska since 2001 in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau and the Mat-Su Valley. However, for a variety of reasons, including staff turnover, the number of CIT trained law enforcement personnel is insufficient.

Although there identified communities interested in developing and implementing the Crisis Now model as an evidence-based approach to address the needs of persons in a behavioral health crisis, this will not negate the need for CIT trained law enforcement and other first responder personnel. In fact, the personnel implementing the Crisis Now model will be those trained in the CIT model.

Furthermore, not all communities in Alaska will have the capacity to implement the Crisis Now model. In these areas having CIT trained law enforcement and other first responders will promote better outcomes for Alaskans experiencing a behavioral health crisis. The co-response of a law enforcement officer and a mental health practitioner will address the behavioral health needs of the individual in crisis, reduce repeat calls for service for the same individual, and prevent unnecessary incarcerations.